

EXHIBIT No. 10
Date 3-18-2011 HB 180

HOUSE BILL NO. 180:
AN ACT REVISING THE CLOSE OF VOTER REGISTRATION

Testimony by Carol Bellin, Elections Worker, 720 S. 5th Street W., Missoula, MT 59801

Mr./Madame Chair, Rep. Edmunds and Members of the Committee;

My name is Carol Bellin. I am a Montana citizen, and a "SuperVoter" (I have not missed voting in an election ever since I moved to Montana eleven years ago). At almost every election in the last eight years I have been employed as either an Election Judge or an Election Aide, working at a wide range of polling places and voting centers in Missoula County. I am a dedicated advocate for increasing voter participation, which is why I am one of the few who always makes the time in my schedule to help with elections.

I encourage you to vote against House Bill 180 today. It is with disappointment as an election worker that I learned of HB 180 - a bill that tarnishes the great accomplishments made by election workers across the State. We have succeeded in proving that same day registration works and is democratically sound. Election workers have the will and our ever improving technology is providing the way to move forward with confidence in election-day voter registration. I see no compelling or fact-driven reason why Montana should regress to the days of frustrating and turning back citizens who show up at the polls with good intentions to exercise their right to vote.

In all of my hours spent at polling places and voting centers, I have not found any basis for claims that same day registration has resulted in fraudulent voting. It is also a fiction that the majority of late registrants are irresponsible people who procrastinate beyond reason. The vast majority of voters that I witnessed using late registration were responsible citizens that had no idea that their status on the voting lists had changed. There are several different technical reasons that this may happen without the voter being aware. Or, perhaps for some personal reason, a voter missed recent elections moved and forgot to notify the Elections office of their address change. Sometimes voters have been confused because their precincts and/or regular polling place was changed or even closed.

When fellow citizens in these situations are motivated enough to travel to a polling place to vote on Election Day, I am very proud of how competently the Elections staff has helped them re-register and exercise their right to vote. I would guess that in well over 95% of the late registrants that I witnessed, the situation was easily resolvable and corrected. What is important here is that the voter left with a positive feeling that government was working FOR them, even if they had to travel to a different polling place or central elections office and wait in line to re-register. Conversely, in the old days before late registration, citizens who came to vote on Election Day, discovered that for some reason their name was no longer on the voting lists and couldn't vote became extremely irate. Sometimes they even accused election workers of trying to prevent them from voting and left with a negative feeling about coming to vote in the future.

If you believe as I do that we must make every effort to encourage and value citizen enfranchisement, then we must not defeat our most basic democratic expression by regressing. We have the technology and the tools to continually protect, streamline and improve our citizens voting rights and participation rates. I urge you to support the dedicated election workers who do their jobs well by opposing H.B. 180. Thank you. Carol Bellin